

# Conservation Appraisal of Burghead

Spring 2009

Conducted for The Moray Council, Development Services



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## Acknowledgements

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this report is 'to provide a character appraisal of the Burghead settlement and recommend whether it merits designation as a Conservation Area by the local planning authority'.

## **2.0 Background**

During the preparation of the Moray Local Plan 2008, Historic Scotland suggested that the local planning authority consider the merits of conservation area status for Burghead and Duffus. As a result, an action was contained within the Moray Local Plan 2008 (policy IMP 4) to investigate the potential for conservation area status for these settlements.

In order to obtain an independent assessment, the Moray Council (through Development Services) commissioned NB Planning<sup>1</sup> to carry out a character appraisal of Burghead and set out recommendations for consideration by Council Officers and/or Committee Members.

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## 3.0 The Planning Context

### 3.1 Legislation

Unlike listed buildings, Conservation Areas are designated by local authorities and not the Scottish Government agency Historic Scotland. **The Planning Act (Scotland) 1997** states that local authorities have a statutory duty to identify and designate Conservation Areas. The Act defines Conservation Areas as those with "*special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance*". Special architectural character may refer to groups of individual buildings, forms of urban development, architectural set pieces, spaces between buildings, or the best examples of town planning. Special historic interest will likely refer to connections with historic events, themes, or people of historic and cultural significance. The fact that physical aspects of surviving structures may possess such significance does not mean automatically that they cannot be altered or changed. Thus, understanding the significance of a place should not simply be thought of as placing constraints on future action. The special architectural or historic interest of a conservation area does not preclude new development. Planning authorities must consider the impact of new development or alterations on the historic and architectural integrity of the area, and may determine planning applications favourably where they are considered to conserve and/or enhance the area. Development adjacent to the conservation area must also take into account its impact on the area. There are over currently 600 conservation areas in Scotland.

### 3.2 National Guidance

Scottish planning policy now comes in the form of Scottish Planning Policy Statements (SPPs) which are gradually replacing **National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPGs)**. SPP 1 'The Planning System' states, "*...maintaining and enhancing the quality of the historic environment and preserving the country's heritage are important functions of the planning system*". NPPG5 'Archaeology and Planning' outlines "*...the role of the planning system in*

*identifying, protecting and recording archaeological remains". NPPG 14 'Natural Heritage' supports "...conservation of the historic landscape as an important cultural as well as natural resource". NPPG 18 'Planning and the Historic Environment' clearly states that "...planning has a role to play in reconciling the need to protect our heritage with the need to accommodate and promote suitable opportunities for change... hence the need to understand the dynamics of the historic environment...Conservation should not be backward looking". It also goes on to say "...the designation of conservation areas should not simply be used as a way of increasing the level of control exercised over development". The guideline states, however, that "Structure Plans and Local Plans provide the basis of an integrated approach to the protection, conservation and enhancement of the historic environment".*

Scottish Government planning advice comes in the form of **Planning Advice Notes (PANs)**. PAN 71 Conservation Area Management states that the *"...designation of a Conservation Area is a means to safeguard and enhance the sense of place, character and appearance of our most valued historic places. Buildings of character, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, trees, historic street patterns, open spaces, and designed gardens and landscapes are important components of these areas. However, designation alone will not secure the protection and enhancement of such areas"*. The advice note emphasises that conservation areas should not be focused upon regulation and control, but embrace change management and active enhancement of such areas by taking positive, yet realistic, action for improvement. It also encourages local authorities to monitor and regularly review their Conservation Areas with community involvement. The advice note, moreover, recommends that planning authorities carry out specialist Conservation Area appraisals and utilise them, not only for development control purposes, but also for making cases for human and financial resources.

Historic Scotland published its own **Circular - 'Memorandum of Guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas'** - in 1998, which is chiefly

targeted at local authorities. Chapter 4 refers to Conservation Areas specifically and item 4.1 to the issue of 'designation'. Accepting that there is no standard specification for Conservation Areas, the Circular points out that "*Conservation Areas are broadly significant architectural or historic places due to their listed buildings, ancient monuments, building groups or open spaces, street pattern, town planning, landscape gardening, or distinctive character*". Reasons for designating an area should include its importance, distinctiveness or uniqueness, its value in the wider context, its present condition and the scope for improvement. Conservation Areas can be large or small and there is considerable variation in practice between local authorities. The Scottish government urge local authorities to keep their local situation under review and encourages cases for new or revised Conservation Areas. By investigating the potential of Burghead as a new conservation area, the Moray Council is adhering to this advice.

### 3.3 Regional and Local Policy and Guidance

#### The Structure Plan

The Moray Structure Plan April 07 sets out the strategic policy for the Moray area. It categorises Moray's settlements into four tiers, with Burghead cited as a third tier 'Smaller Town or Village' (p10). It is noted that the Structure Plan makes it a "*...clear intention to avoid over development and cramming in any urban area*" (p16).

The Plan's built environment policies state that Moray has 17 Conservation Areas (within 14 settlements); 79 scheduled monuments; 2681 archaeological sites; and 1665 listed buildings. The Plan acknowledges the "*...undoubted educational, tourism, recreational and cultural value of the area's heritage*"(p.27). The Plan's environment and resources policy (2f) confirms the intentions of "*...conserving and enhancing the area's built heritage resources and their settings*".

## The Local Plan

A settlement map showing the extent of Burghead, along with settlement specific policies and proposals, is contained within the Moray Local Plan 2008 (pp. 110-113). This shows a plan of the existing buildings and main features within the settlement boundary.

Main planning objectives for the settlement include (i) continuing to improve the overall environmental setting and visual appearance (ii) the continued viability of the harbour (iii) new opportunities for housing and (iv) supporting tourism.

The Local Plan introduces its settlement maps (Section 6.1) by stating that, in general, *"...all proposals will require to satisfy essential development requirements as well as other constraints including [amongst other things] archaeological sites, listed buildings, flooding and contaminated land"*. This includes taking into account economic development, residential provision and the protection of the built and natural environment. It is stated that (Policy IMP 1) *"...new development will require to be sensitively sited, design and service appropriate to the amenity of the surrounding area. New development must be integrated into the surrounding landscape and the scale, density and character must be appropriate"*. The justification for such a policy stance is that *"...the quality of development in terms of siting, design and servicing is a priority consideration"*. New housing on designated sites will be acceptable if *"...adequate servicing and infrastructure is available, can be made available, if its scale and design fits the character of the community and, if it does not adversely impact on any environmental amenity site"*. These general policies conform to SPP1 'The Planning System' and SPP3 'Planning for Homes'.

The Moray Local Plan 2008 Built Environment section (BE) conforms with national planning policy, specifically NPPG 5 'Planning and Archaeology' and NPPG 18 'Planning and the Historic Environment', in that *"...development*

*proposals will be refused where they will adversely affect scheduled ancient monuments or have a detrimental effect on the character, integrity or setting of the listed buildings. Any alterations and extensions to listed buildings new developments within the curtilage, must be of the highest quality, and respect the original structure in terms of setting, scale, materials and design".*

Demolition of a Listed Building, or building within a Conservation Area, will not normally be supported by the planning authority and will only be considered as a last resort. Within Conservation Areas (policy BE3) any new development proposals must be submitted as full detailed planning applications (as opposed to end outline) and should "...*preserve or enhance the established traditional character and appearance of the area*". Boundary walls and fences will not be promoted over the height of 1 m unless the character of the area suggests otherwise. Within Conservation Areas, 'Article 4 directions' may be applied for to remove 'permitted development rights', such as replacing traditional windows and doors and painting external walls. Moray currently has Conservation Areas in (i) the 'Royal Burghs' of Forres, Elgin and Cullen; (ii) the 'planned towns' of Archiestown, Fochabers, and Keith; (iii) the former port communities at The Yardie, Buckie; Findhorn; Findochty; Garmouth; Kingston; and Portknockie (iv) the 'estate hamlets' at Berryhillock and Whitemire.

#### **4.0 Location and Setting**

Burghead, is situated on Moray's coastline within the parish of Duffus. The settlement is located approximately 8 miles north-west of Elgin on the B9089. The settlement is contained within the 'Coastal Island' zone of the MRN Landscape Character Assessment Map with a large bay in the Moray Firth stretching approx 10 miles from Findhorn in the west to Burghead in the east.

The town is built on the slopes and ridge of a promontory of land that points north west across the sea towards the hills and mountains of Caithness and

Sutherland. The land rises by gradual ascent from sandy plains to a rocky sandstone precipice almost 20m in height and is surrounded on three sides by the sea.

## 5.0 Historical Development

Burghead (or 'Brugh Head') was an important Iron Age seaport, and may have been an island during this early period containing the largest historic fortress in Scotland. The site of this Pictish fort lies at the seaward end of Burghead (Grid ref NJ 110 690). The massive ramparts and ditches that dominated the end of the promontory were clearly visible up to the 19th century, but most of them were destroyed during the major remodelling of the town between 1805 and 1809. Radiocarbon dating suggests that the fort was built between the 4th and 6th centuries AD, and, possibly following Viking occupation in the ninth century, was vacated some time in the 9th or 10<sup>th</sup>, after the formation of a united Scotland.

Its near 20m high tip is crowned with the damaged remains of the fort : 18th century recordings show it as a medallion-shaped structure with a ridge running along the centre and a series of landward facing ramparts in arrowhead formation. The walls are thought to have been timber laced. Watson records some of the archaeological evidence of the 19th century now sadly lost:

*"During the time of levelling the ground, it is stated that many valuable articles of antiquity were found, such as coins, battle axes, swords, and other articles, but they have almost entirely disappeared. The only articles of importance now remaining are an ancient jug and four very curious bulls carved in stone... Various carved stones of Caledonian and mediaeval dates have been found amongst the ruins of the fort of an interesting kind" (p.284).*

Little is recorded about Burghead during the Middle Ages, but it is thought to have been in possession of the great house of De Moravia during the 14th century, after which it passed through many hands.

An ecclesiastical building may have been sited near the entrance of the fort as early as the 12th century and was in existence until the latter part of the 18th century when "... *with barbarous taste, the venerable remains were carried away to build a mill in the neighbourhood*" (Watson, p.284).

General Roy's map of 1750 indicates an old fishing village of around 50 randomly arranged properties, mostly with north-south orientation, on the eastern side of the promontory below the banks and ditches protecting the fort. The western side of the promontory below the fortalice is shown laid out with a few houses and agricultural rigs. By the late 18th century, Burghead contained '400 souls' (Grant, 1798). The fort was 'mutilated' after the construction of the port and only the central ridge survives.

In 1805, a group of 8 landowners bought the old fishing village from Sir Archibald Dunbar to lay out a regular town of straight parallel streets with a port at the top end. The harbour was intended to function as a major port for Elgin and Forres, there being no other good or safe harbour along the Moray Firth between Buchan and Inverness. This operation involved eradicating the old fishing village and around half of the fort site.

*"The new proprietors entered on a difficult undertaking -- to sweep away an old village, build a new one, and erect a harbour suitable for the wants of the country -- but they embarked in it very zealously. They got a plan of the project at the village, swept away the old houses almost entirely, and laid out the place in regular streets; the best buildings being intended to be nearest to harbour, for of which the highest fue duties were to be charged, and the streets, as they extended eastwards, being to be charged at a smaller of rate; the east side being intended for the fisherman"* (Watson, p.285).

In the course of a few years many good houses were erected, and the streets gradually filled up. In 1818, William Young became sole owner and developed Burghead into Moray's principal herring fishing station and a major exporter port of grain<sup>2</sup>. In the 1820s, the town witnessed the building of its first new church and there were three in place by the end of the century. By

1835, Burghead was one of the most complete harbours in the north of Scotland with over 400 vessels fishing or trading with the Baltic area. By the mid 19th century, Burghead was largely as we see it now and by 1860 trading was considerable and the population up to 1500. In 1862, a railwayline was taken from Alves Station, thus rendering access to Burghead from all parts of the country, including valuable connections with the maltings industry. By 1864, Burghead afforded work for a considerable number of inhabitants, giving the place the "*...appearance of bustle and traffic seldom seen at a quiet fishing village*" (Watson Page 292). However, by 1946, the demise of the fishing industry was such that the Burghead fishing fleet was reduced to only 7 boats and the harbour was taken into public ownership. In 1963, the shutting down of the railway line further reduced the use of the port. Small-scale fishers and various pleasure craft now mainly use the port. It is still, nevertheless, still regarded as the heart of the community.

## 6.0 Character Analysis

### 6.1 General form

The general form of Burghead is contained within two distinct areas, i.e. (i) the 19th-century planned 'new town' development and (ii) the later eastern sprawl of late 20th century developments.

The highly imposed, and methodical, grid-iron plan of the 19th century is typical of planned villages at this time and epitomises the conviction and determination of the period's 'great improvers'.

*"The town is laid out on a regular plan, the streets are of ample width, and the house is substantially built of free*

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<sup>2</sup> The exports and imports were considerable, and consisted generally of grain, potatoes, timber, manures, coals, etc. The principal trade of the port, however, was in connection with the herring and white fishing.

*stone of which there is an unlimited supply in the immediate neighbourhood' (J. and W. Watson page 283)*

The central portion of the planned settlement along the ridge of the peninsula has 16 rectangular blocks (4 x 4) of consistent design that is only broken by a diagonal road through the south easternmost section (see 6.2). An initial impression of visual uniformity is created by the use of buff sandstone and natural slate.

The planned settlement's east 'entrance' side has 5 rectangular blocks that preserve the overall form, but its regular pattern and scale is interrupted by a school and industrial maltings buildings. The former railway line curves around the coast to the east of the planned village and its physical presence creates a boundary and thus a change of character and form to modern estates, bungalows, larger plots, and lower density.

The western end of the planned village has 4 blocks, but their own inner pattern is interrupted by historical artefacts, late development and topography. From a design perspective, there is an unsatisfactory end to the planned village along Bath Street where, without a street frontage to match the others, it appears unfinished.

The north side of the planned village, facing the North Sea, has single street with backland sea views and a coastal path leading east to the neighbouring town Hopeman.

The south side of the village, facing the bay, was planned as a broader, and longer, industrial block when compared to the other residential blocks in the village. Due to the demise of the town's industry, this block has lost many of its sea-facing buildings and is now mostly backland overlooking car park, environmental space and

recreational ground linking the caravan site along a former railway route. This area is now a main attraction point for tourists.

## 6.2 Spaces and views

Burghead has a host of intriguing spaces and views of different character that, collectively, create a special sense of place.

### Grant Street

The first impressive view of Burghead comes virtually immediately on arrival when turning on the main road north-west to align with Grant Street. This street is the principal access (and axis) for the town and is laid out along a perfect straight line for a full kilometre as it leads down through the 20th-century bungalows into the planned village before terminating at the headland. The coastguard station is visible high at the end of the vista throughout its whole length and the regular, streetfronting 19th-century properties perfectly frame this view. The consistency of the street frontage is only broken at the NW end by the open space of the burial ground (between Nos 85 and 87) and the undeveloped ground at the SW end (Nos 58-60).

### Granary Street

Granary Street provides a slightly different perspective of the town from the orthogonal street pattern. It branches diagonally off Grant Street near the entrance to the planned village and slices through a south easterly block as it heads down towards the harbour area. On its north side, the street is mainly residential scale - like much of the rest of the village - but, as it nears the harbour, its built character changes to a more industrial scale with a line of taller, stone-built warehouses. The north side of the street offers intermittent views up the 'crossover' side streets, whilst the south side has partial views over the bay. The street itself terminates in a slightly unsatisfactory, meaningless manner at the base of the promontory at the back of the

warehouses, with the northern approach flanked by some modern developments that dilute the pattern of the planned village.

## Harbour

The harbour is the functional and visual culmination point for the south west end of the village and it makes an important spatial contribution to Burghead (not to mention offering a plethora of interesting sights and sounds). The North Quay was environmentally upgraded in 2006 by the Moray Council to 'help improve a working harbour that looked down at heel'<sup>3</sup>. The improvement involved the use of natural materials (Caithness slabs, Yorkstone, and granite) and was executed in favour of clearly differentiating new work from original. The space and detail (e.g. large stone blocks, stone steps, iron bollards and metal rails) reflect an industrial scale. The North Quay historically provides an important visual connection between the harbour town and the promontory.

## Station Road

Although Station Road has lost much of its historical properties and meaning with the closure of the railwayline serving the harbour and warehouses, it now makes a valuable contribution to Burghead in its modern-day context. The area now functions as an open space strip linking the harbour area with a car park, recreational space, a coastal footpath, a caravan park and community woodland (see MLP 2008 – Designation ENV 8). The open space also permits uninterrupted views across Burghead Bay over the waters to Caithness.

## Headland

'The headland' at the tip of the promontory is, on the face of it, an unusual area of green space that, until the recent interpretive work by the Burghead Headland Trust, was to many visitors just a rough piece

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<sup>3</sup> Using local architects LDN.

of undeveloped ground. Only the former coastguard buildings of Bonnieview, Tongah and Stravaig intrude on the highground open space. Due to its offset location and architectural design, the small whitewashed circular lookout tower sits more happily in its surroundings than its nearby neighbours. The Trust has attempted more careful management of the headland space - e.g. through traffic control - and has taken advantage of the spectacular views in all directions using interpretation boards, viewfinder panels and strategically placed seating.

### Forteach Street

Forteach Street runs along the north boundary of the settlement and a line of streetfacing houses on the north side cause the town to turn its back on the sea, rather than look out to it. These north side houses only span four blocks of the settlement – they are prevented going any farther to the west by a natural narrowing of the promontory that leads onto the lower level of the Pictish fort site. The street no longer goes any farther to the east by the construction of the towering maltings.

### Cross streets

The cross streets of Burghead (e.g. Church Street, Young Street, Brander Street) are not designed to be principal spaces, but they do provide interesting views and coherent links right across the promontory ridge. The majority have streetfronting properties or stone boundary walling that enclose the street, reinforce the grid, and frame the views up to the ridge or over the waters.

### Backland Lanes

Similarly, the narrow backland lanes that segment each block to provide foot access to the rears of the residential properties are not intended to be principal contributors to the townscape but, with large sections of stone boundary walling and/or timber fencing, they each

reinforce the grid pattern and provide charm, interest and a measure of uniqueness to the place.

### Maritime character

The spaces and views of Burghead generally convey the maritime character and northerly exposed location of the town. For example, there is a lack of treeplanting and soft landscaping throughout and rocky outcrops and open foreshores (as well as the sights and sounds of a coastal community) are prevalent. Ephemeral features such as boats, buoys, nets and ropes, all add positively to the spatial and visual character of the town.

## 6.3 Built character

The domestic scale of planned town, with small plots and high density, is the dominant building characteristic of Burghead. Despite tight adherence to building codes – e.g. symmetrically composed street frontages - the houses are plain yet varied, some two storeys, some with pediments above the door, or datestones, and there are frequent dormer windows. The walls and narrow gables of the houses are substantially built with local buff-coloured freestone and the 40-45 degree roofs are finished using Welsh or Scottish slate. Rainwater goods are traditionally made of cast iron; central entrance doors are wooden and frequently panelled with painted finish; window openings are generally narrow with wooden and sash and case frames usually painted white; walls and chimneys are lime pointed or harled with a whitewash finish. With a simple palette of unpretentious finishes, the town is not a colourful or ostentatious one, and yet it is not drab like some other northern fishing towns of this period. Reflecting local character (see Martin and Roger) the houses are generally straightforward, honest and robust.

The scale of the village changes from domestic to industrial on the approach to harbour. The harbour is lined with elegant, 19th century three-storey warehouses, illustrating that the quayside was planned as an architectural

symbol of confidence (see Section 6.4 below). A feature of the warehouses is their large, arched doorways at ground level, as well as high level doors for hoisted access of goods.

*“The herring fishing was then only in its infancy, but he [William Young] saw at once that it ought to be fostered and encouraged, and he proceeded to lay off a large range of fishing stations, salt cellars, and other accommodation. These were finished at great expense, and for convenience and an arrangement no better curing stations have ever been affected at any port. The town and harbour continued to prosper under the key of its spirited and enlightened proprietor, who died in 1842.”* (Watson, p.288)

The warehouses were interspersed with single storey lean-to structures that, although no longer intact, permitted visual connection between the harbour and the promontory.

The harbour itself is constructed using substantial blocks of tooled and squared sandstone with moulded string course set below the top of the wall. The harbour is built as a narrow rectangular basin with the entrance to the west at right angles to the long axis and protected by an irregular breakwater.

The ancient Well site with its fine walls, steps and archway, also built using large blocks of sandstone, illustrates the abilities of the early inhabitants at the promontory.

## 6.4 Key buildings

The planned village of Burghead has several distinctive 19<sup>th</sup> century landmarks, most of which are Listed Buildings.

### The Harbour

The harbour was built in 1807-10 to the design of the renowned engineer, Thomas Telford, after the original one was destroyed in a storm in 1790. It was then extended in 1832, 1835, 1858, and 1881<sup>4</sup>.

*"The projected new harbour was commenced about the year 1807, and no expense was spared to make it commodious and useful, according to the requirements of the time. A contractor was got from Aberdeenshire, who carried out the work actively and ably, and was entirely finished by the year 1810. It was most substantially built, and has, with very little to repair, resisted the sea and weather. The projectors committed a great mistake - that they did not get an Act of Parliament for enabling them to levy shore dues, and to regulate the harbour before they commenced to build. The want of this hampered them much in their future proceedings, as they could only charge dues on shipping and goods to a very moderate extent" (Watson, footnotes,p.286).*

The North quay is deemed worthy of category B listing, signifying a structure of regional importance. The listing includes a reference to a 'small, later whitewashed concrete beacon at extreme end' (ref HB 22749). The North Quay is a surviving fragment of the redevelopment of the harbour to the designs of Thomas Telford and now provides a handsome platform for fishermen, residents, and tourists alike .

### Granary Street Warehouses

In the early to mid 19th century, Burghead harbour flourished with the passage of grain, potatoes, timber, and manures, coal and fishing. The warehouses, and their adjoining single storey structures, would have been used for the storage of incoming and outgoing goods and are Listed Category A in recognition as a nationally important 'set piece' grouping.

The four-storey, most northern warehouse (number 94) is classically composed with a centre, round-headed and keystone entrance facing south west to the harbour. It has the highest honour Category A Listing status (updated B to A in 1988). Since it was built on the south westerly slopes of the former fort site, the rear central entrance was raised to first floor access

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<sup>4</sup> The North Breakwater was extended in 1832 and again in 1835; a new jetty was built in 1858; the South Quay jetty was extended in 1881.

off of Granary Street, reached by a stone forestair. The building is constructed with tooled rubble with local sandstone window dressings, but traces of lime harling suggest an altogether different finish than that of today.

The neighbouring warehouse (number 92) is category B listed (A for group) and is of similar design, albeit altered. The adjoining single storey store is now derelict, although its outer walling and roof outline remains visible.

The third warehouse in the Category A grouping was downgraded Category B to C(s) in 1988 following the building's slightly unsatisfactory conversion to a dwelling in 1987. The warehouse was originally designed similar to its neighbours, but now has a series of alterations following conversion.

The fourth warehouse, not included in the listed grouping, is located at the eastern end of the quayside (number 72) but is individually listed Category C(s). It was built in the late 19th century as a three storey, 5-bay warehouse facing the harbour, but was converted to a shop and dwelling in 1983, resulting in alterations to its windows, a roof and finishes.

The final listed warehouse is not on the quayside, but it is set back on the north side of Granary Street near the junction with Church Street (number 57). This three storey, 5 bay, south facing warehouse was constructed in the early-to-mid 19th century with harled pointed walls and buff sandstone ashlar dressings. It has a wide, central entrance on the ground floor and an arched loading door on the first.

### Coastguard Station

The coastguard station, former coastguard house (Bonnieview), and the coastguard rescue equipment store all occupy a highly prominent site on the headland overlooking the village, harbour and Burghead bay<sup>5</sup>. The buildings are early-to-mid 19th century and category B listed buildings. They are single and two storey traditional stone structures with whitewashed walls, painted

margins, regular fenestration with multi-pane glazed windows, and slated roofs with stone chimney stacks.

### Storm Signal

The Storm Signal it is an unusual survival within the site of the Pictish fort and may even have historic linkages from ancient times. There would likely have been a tall mast in the centre of the walled enclosure used to warn sailors when a storm was imminent. It is now a mid-19th century circular plan structure with a World War II Lookout in the centre of standard design. The structure has harled and whitewashed walling with steps leading through an arched doorway to the upper platform. Since the start of the millennium, the building has been successfully used as the Visitors' Centre for the Burghead Headland Trust (although the small scale of the building greatly limits the scope of the centre).

### Masonic Hall

The Masonic Hall on Granary Street is a two storey, mid-19th century, 5-bay property with harl pointed walls and ashlar margins. It has a central, keystoned entrance and long ground floor windows. The roof is slated with a stone ridge and has gable end chimney stacks. The building is listed Category B.

## 6.5 Heritage assets

Aside from its general form and key buildings, the town has a number of other tangible heritage assets.

### Pictish Fort remains

Since the formation of the Burghead Headland trust, visitors have been encouraged to the nationally significant Scheduled Ancient Monument site of the Pictish fort - an open area approx 175 x 175m. Visitor parking and toilets are available at the harbour and parking is also available on Grant Street.

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<sup>5</sup> The buildings are located on the site of the 'inner citadel' of the ancient fort.

Disabled parking is available at the entrance to the site. Guided tours for groups of over 15 people are conducted by arrangement.

The Headland trust promotes Burghead as 'the ancient centre of the Pictish kingdom with the largest Pictish fort in Scotland'. The Trust tries to visualise the high imposing ramparts of the fort and attempts to educate visitors about how the fort was built.

*"Despite the destruction of the greater part of the extensive defences which once cut off the headland now occupied by the village of Burghead, this remains one of the most impressive fortified sites in Scotland...Easily one of the largest forts of any period constructed in Scotland, this was clearly a site of high status, possibly the principal political centre of northern Pictland".*

(Oram, 1996)

*"The sheer size of Burghead [fort] leads to speculation that Burghead could have been in the top grade of Pictish royal sites."*

(Shepherd, in Sellar, 1993)

The Trust walks visitors around the site and visits the Doorie Hill - the sole survivor of the cross rampart and home of the annual Clavie fire ceremony that celebrates the Pictish New Year 11th of January<sup>6</sup>. The Trust also assists people in exploring the remarkable Well which provided the fort with water and may have been used for other rituals<sup>7</sup>. The Well is quite unique to Britain and is in the State care of Historic Scotland. Although in the late 19th century

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<sup>6</sup> The burning of the Clavie echoes a pagan fire festival where a tar-filled barrel is set alight and carried around the village before being set up on the remains of the ramparts of the fort. The circular plinth of the Clavie is 'Listed' Category C(s) for its historic interest and lies within one of the 3 Scheduled Areas at the fort.

<sup>7</sup> Reached by a flight of worn steps, the incredible ancient Well consists of a square rock-cut chamber containing a 1.3m deep tank surrounded by a platform. The Well likely supplied potable water to the fort and may had a religious function connected to an early Christian monastery nearby. It may also have had pagan associations perhaps involving sacrifice. The Well was discovered in 1809 after an old fisherman had related tradition regarding the existence of a well there. Accordingly, the ground was dug and, after removing quantities of

it was "...a place often in a disgusting state, and not fit for the inspection of strangers", it is now walled off, well maintained and manicured, and only accessible through a local keyholder.

### Pictish artefacts

The local Library and Elgin Museum each displays two of the unique and famous 'Burghead Bull' Pictish incised stone carvings that are thought to symbolise the military prowess of the fort<sup>8</sup>. The images of the bulls are frequently used as icons for the town and are important to the town's identity.

### Old Burial Ground

Other local sites of interest to residents and visitors include the 18th century Kirkyard with its picturesque slabs, tabletombs and site of St Aethan's Chapel<sup>9</sup>. There were ruins of the church or chapel until the end of the 18th century, when the stones were used for construction in the vicinity. The square, walled burial ground site was listed Category C(s) in 1988 and received Scheduled Ancient Monument status in 1998.

### Natural Heritage

Burghead's natural heritage assets are also worthy of mention, such as the stunning views along the Moray coastline (with its Site of Special Scientific Interest status for geological and fossil content and its Site of Interest to Natural Science designation). Furthermore, the views over the Moray Firth to Caithness and Sutherland, offer prospects of seeing the Moray Firth's bottlenose dolphins, and the various birdlife surrounding the promontory.

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rubbish, a stair appeared, then the well was found in a complete state. When discovered, it made considerable excitement in the country at the time.

<sup>8</sup> Two other carvings are held at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh and the British Museum in London. It is speculated that there was once c.30 such carvings at the fort site, possibly located at the entrance gates.

<sup>9</sup> Burghead Library also holds fragments of carving from an early Christian corner-post shrine found on this site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The built and natural heritage assets of Burghead are promoted through a series of interpretation panels found at various points around the town (e.g. at the harbour, the fort visitor centre, the well, the beach).

### Cultural Assets

The town also has a rich cultural heritage expressed through art and design, street names and as well as through music, dance, ceremony, literature, food and language (see Martin and Roger, 2007).

## 6.6 Extent of alterations

The most significant alteration took place at the beginning of the 19th century when the old town was swept away and the new town was laid out in regimented streets. The new town not only extirpated the mediaeval community and its early period Chapel, but also almost entirely removed the prehistoric ramparts save for the few remnants. Even by the end of the 19th century, although the audacity of the economic vision was to be admired, the loss of the town's antiquity was being lamented.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1970s, one of the harbour warehouses was reconditioned as a boat centre, with an upper balcony, weatherboarding and flag poles. Meanwhile, after lying empty for many years, the most northerly warehouse has also been converted into flatted accommodation, although their execution has not impressed.

*"The redeveloped warehouses (90 and 72 Granary street) have both been clumsily executed thus reducing their significance and affecting the whole setting of the harbour" (LDN, 2005).*

The architectural set piece has also suffered from the loss of the single storey warehouses that were once found between the larger warehouses on North Quay. These have not been replaced and are currently gap sites that are promoted within the current Local Plan (see 3.3). Any future replacement

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<sup>10</sup> Watson records *"it is fortunate that so accurate sketches of them [the remains] have been preserved"* p.283.

should pay heed to the historic arrangement of the North Quay set piece (see 6.2 - 6.4)

The south quay has also lost some of the storehouses that were in place during the 19th century, but that these were not significant architectural structures and the quayside remains operational with lightweight storehouses to this day.

A number of stone-built buildings have been lost from south side of the planned village between Granary Street and Station Road. These would mostly have been storage buildings. In some cases, remnants of external walls remain whereas, in other cases, these have been replaced by modern industrial buildings. In some situations, they have been removed in favour of merely increasing garden space and exploiting views over the bay.

The railway lines and sheds at Station Road have gone (see 1905 OS for details) and have been replaced with car parking and open space.

Throughout the planned village, there are occasional new houses fitted into gap sites; for example, at the west end of Granary Street (e.g. nos 75, 77), at the east end of Station Road, opposite the station hotel, and at Forteath Street (e.g. nos 71, 82). There are also occasions where 19th-century housing has been replaced with new housing; for example, 11-40, 49, 51, 65 Forteath Street and 77 Dunbar Street.

The coastguard station on the headland has been converted and extended to provide three residential properties with the additions of garages and outbuildings that intrude upon the historic site.

Throughout the town, there have been a number of general alterations, including some plastic replacement materials and designs for traditional painted timber windows, doors, dormers, and cast iron rainwater goods.

There have also been a number of backland extensions, new garages and other outbuildings that have increased the building density.

Although many of the recent alterations to the town have undermined the integrity and authenticity of the original fabric of the planned village, they have not wholly destroyed the town's overall character and many of the alterations are reversible.

## 6.7 Condition

The 19th century village was constructed predominantly using stone walls and slate roofs and, since most of the properties are occupied as houses, the town is generally in good condition. However, since Burghead is not a particularly prosperous town, many of the properties require some repair work, such as painting, pointing, and patching of slates.

There are not many derelict buildings in the village, but where these exist (e.g. south side of Granary Street, North Quay) their fabric could easily be incorporated into renovation work.

Following the intervention of the Burghead Headland Trust, the Fort site and visitors' centre is now in a state of high maintenance, although the problem of sea erosion to the tip of the promontory near Scarf Craig still remains.

High quality (and expensive) intervention by the public sector has greatly improved the North quay landscape and also set a benchmark for other future schemes. Elsewhere, there are some small-scale areas of waste ground or open space that could benefit from tidying up or permanently enhancing and managing. In this respect, Historic Scotland has set a high standard of care management at The Well.

In general, the tarred roads and concrete pavements of the planned village are of an acceptable standard and condition for modern car-based use, although they do conspire to provide a large, impermeable, 'grey canvass' to the town.

Most of the backland lanes are not surfaced and appeared to be 'unadopted' by the local authority.

## 6.8 Pressures and capacity for change

The sea naturally contains Burghead on three sides to the north, south and west, so its expansion is highly constrained. Recent pressure for development in Burghead, especially housing, has generally been accommodated on greenfield land to the east. The fixed infrastructure of the Burghead's 19<sup>th</sup> century planned grid network (see Sect 5), together with the protected sites at the headland and harbour (see Sect 6) greatly limit development opportunities within the town, but the local planning authority has had various enquiries regarding gap sites and vacant brownfield land within the planned settlement. For example, there are three gap sites on North Quay created by the demise of the storehouses (see items 5 and 6.2 – 6.4). Two of these are used as storeyards, and one was recently sold by the Council. These sites (R1 – MLP 2008) offer the potential to improve the current image of the harbour if redeveloped to the standard of the original set piece. There are also several outbuildings along the Quay that are semi-derelict and require renovation or appropriate redevelopment. Furthermore, development of 'West Foreshore' (Site R4 - MLP 2008) could significantly alter the character of the historic core of Burghead if introducing modern development along the foreshore.

## 7.0 Summary of issues

When considering Burghead for Conservation Area status, there are both positive and negative factors to weigh up:

### Positive

- \* significance of Pictish fort (scheduled ancient monument site)
- \* early Christian site
- \* redevelopment of the now listed harbour and association with Thomas Telford
- \* redevelopment of the North quay and its setting with nationally-important warehouses
- \* new 'planned village' of grid-iron design
- \* major historical trading port for the Laich of Moray
- \* environmental improvement of the North quay
- \* natural heritage (coast, SSSI, SINS, flora and fauna, views)
- \* cultural heritage (Pagan New Year/Clavie, Pictish artefacts, place and street names)
- \* tourism (Pictish stronghold, visitors' centre, coastal footpath, harbour, caravan park)
- \* some gap sites and/or derelict buildings
- \* scope for enhancement (especially near harbour and slipway areas)
- \* reversible alterations (throughout planned town)
- \* some pressure for development (especially near sensitive sites)
- \* need for regeneration (especially near harbour area)
- \* natural containment and protection offered by peninsula's geography

### Negative

- \* destruction of Pictish fort and original village
- \* demise of the harbour
- \* permanent alterations to the harbour
- \* poor quality alterations to warehouses
- \* permanent alterations to residential properties and backlands
- \* uninspiring streetscape
- \* modern houses out-of-character with 19<sup>th</sup> century setting
- \* no properties on 'Buildings at Risk' register

## Conclusion and recommendations

### Conclusion

Having examined and considered the case for a Conservation Area status, analysis reveals that the points 'in favour' of designation outweigh those 'against'. Whilst it is recognized that the Moray Development Plan offers a reasonable measure of protection, Conservation Area status would be beneficial to Burghead in terms of long-term preservation and enhancement. Without Conservation Area status, the town is vulnerable to more out-of-character development that could be detrimental to its architectural integrity and ultimately erode its identity. It may also lose out on future opportunities for funding and enhancement that could weaken its still apparent economic and tourist potential.

The overall conclusion is therefore that Burghead does merit the designation of a Conservation Area.

That said, the actual boundary of such a designation is less conclusive. Whilst the headland and the harbour are obvious sites for inclusion, the extent to which the planned village is incorporated is a matter of debate.

A Conservation Area that merely covers the headland and harbour, but excludes the planned village, would not provide much added protection to Burghead, so incorporating the 19<sup>th</sup> century development is certainly desirable.

The case for including the whole planned village – i.e. between the headland to the west and King Street to the east - could be argued from both an architectural and historic perspective. A less tenuous, but more pragmatic, proposal could result in a smaller Conservation Area with its east boundary established by any of the crossover streets (e.g. Young, Brander, Sellar, or Park Street).

Elsewhere in Moray, conservation area status for a 19<sup>th</sup> century planned village is rare – i.e. the Outstanding Conservation Areas in Fochabers and upper Cullen are both 18<sup>th</sup> century, as is the small, rural planned village at Archiestown. These early planned villages are protected in their near entirety. Only the 19<sup>th</sup> century planned streets of Keith and Fife-Keith are given Conservation Area status in Moray, and the originally designated areas of the 1980s were reduced in size in the late 1990s to concentrate upon the two principal squares and main streets leading from them.

Burghead, however, does not have a square, or indeed a principal focal space, other than the Headland at the top of Grant Street (see Sect. 6.2). Without the nationally important Pictish and Telford sites at the headland and harbour (see Sect. 5), Burghead's 19<sup>th</sup> century planned village would not merit Conservation Area status in its own right. However, the overall presence and impact of human habitation at the promontory down various millennia makes it undoubtedly worthy of conserving the town's architectural, historic, cultural and natural assets (see Sect. 6), not just for local reasons, but also for regional and national ones too. Including the 19<sup>th</sup> planned village would complete the range of legislative measures available to the public sector towards conserving such assets (see Sect. 6.5).

A farther conclusion is therefore that the full extent of the 19<sup>th</sup> planned settlement deserves to be considered within a newly designated Conservation Area.

## **Recommendations**

- 1. That Burghead is designated a Conservation Area by the local authority (under the guidance procedures of the Scottish Government).**
- 2. The new Conservation Area incorporates the whole promontory area west of King Street.**

- 3. That council officials consult with representatives of the local community, property and landowners, Historic Scotland and other public agencies to agree boundary proposals prior to beginning statutory processes.**
- 4. That this character appraisal be adopted, as soon as possible, as Supplementary Planning Guidance and, therefore, adds weight to the protection of the settlement over and above current local plan policy.**
- 5. That, subject to designation of Conservation Area status, an action plan for the conservation and enhancement of Burghead, including the identification of funding opportunities, be considered.**

## **Appendix**

### **Extracts from Historic Scotland statutory list for Moray Council, Burghead Burgh**

**Item number 1 (HB number 22739)**

**Clavie stone**

**Listed March 1988**

**Category C(s)**

**Item number 2 (HB number 22740)**

**Coastguard Station, Bonnie view and Coastguard rescue equipment  
store**

**Listed March 1988**

**Category B**

**Item number 3 (HB number 22741)**

**Masonic Hall, Granary Street**

**Listed March 1988**

**Category B**

**Item number 4 (HB number 22742)**

**57 Granary St**

**Listed March 1988**

**Category B**

**Item number 6 (HB number 22744)**

**72 Granary street**

**Listed March 1988**

**Category C(s)**

**Item number 7 (HB number 22745)**

**90 Granary St (former warehouse facing North quay)**

**Listed May 1974**

**Category A**

**Item number 8 (HB number 22746)**

**92 Granary St (warehouse facing North quay)**

**Listed May 1974**

**category A**

**Item number 9 (HB number 22747)**

**94 Granary St (warehouse facing North quay)**

**Listed May 1974**

**Category A**

**Item number 10 (HB number 22748)**

**Old burial ground, Grant St  
Listed March 1988  
Category C(s)**

**Item number 11 (HB number 22749)  
Harbour North Pier  
Listed May 1974  
Category B**

**Item number 14 (HB number 46516)  
Storm signal north of harbour  
Listed October 1999  
category C(s)**

**Extract from the registers of Scotland, General Register of Sasines,  
County of Moray, recorded on 22 December 1998:**

**The ancient monuments and archaeological areas act 1979,  
amended entry in the scheduled monuments – 'The monument  
known as Burghead fort, graveyard and chapel, including the Clavie,  
in the parish of Duffus and County of Moray' Ref MOR 98 289.**

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SPPS1 – The Planning System  
NPPG3 -- Land for Housing  
NPPG5 -- Archaeology and Planning  
NPPG8 -- Town Centres  
NPPG14 -- Natural Heritage  
NPPG17 -- Transport and Planning

PAN 67 -- Structure Planning  
PAN40 -- Development Control  
PAN42 -- Archaeology  
PAN49 -- Local Planning  
PAN52 - Planning in Small Towns  
PAN71 -- Conservation Area Management

Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997  
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (Scotland) Act 1997  
Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Scotland) Act 1992

Scottish Government Circular 17/1987 – 'New provisions and revised guidance to Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas'

Historic Scotland Circular 1/1998 – 'Memorandum of guidance on Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas' (revised 1998)

B.S.7913 – 'Guide to the principles of the conservation of historic buildings'

[www.historic-scotland.gov.uk](http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk)

[www.rcahms.gov.uk](http://www.rcahms.gov.uk)

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